## THE PUZZLING PROBLEM OF PLURALISM
### M.ELAINE BOTHA

## 1. Introduction: Ironic reversal

After having read Griffioen's paper1, I was struck by the ironic reversal of the formulation of the problem of culture and multiculturalism which has taken place in the past 25 years. In the late sixties South African students in the Netherlands, were grappling with the problem of cultural and ethnic identity and diversity. The response of Reformational philosophy at the time was a very critical undermining of these notions, based on the memory of excesses perpetrated by National Socialism and theoretically based on Dooyeweerd's rejection of the anarchy of historicism, the conception of cultural differentiation and integration and his rejection of the notion of a "volk", people or cultural entity on the grounds that it was part and parcel of a primitive and undifferentiated society which was bound to disappear in the process of history.  Dooyeweerd's aversion to the "volks"-concept was also rooted in his criticism of the universalistic and totalitarian community ideology which he saw as part of the marriage between the irrationalist trend in sociology and historicism. It is interesting that Dooyeweerd's endeavour to escape the stranglehold of historicism with his strong emphasis on the constant and invariable conditioning structures for reality, perhaps gave rise to a lack of

sensitivity exactly regarding the typically historical and dynamic nature of these structures and exposed a vulnerable side of his philosophy. This was exactly a facet emphasized by Stoker, for which he proposed the "cosmic dimension of events" (Stoker 1970, 331), which would accommodate the dynamic side of creation and so, he argued, would be able to give better account of a variety of phenomena that Stoker claimed could not be dealt with adequately in Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Those of us who had grown up in "apartheid" South Africa, were confessing Christians and patriots at heart knew there was more at stake when it came to cultural diversity than only this opposition between a differentiated nation state and primitive, ethnic cultural communities. Yet, the reality of the ideological distortions which were the result of the recognition and political accommodation of this multicultural reality in South Africa, gradually made most of the original proponents of the notion of a "people" cautious not to emphasize or dwell on this phenomenon. A quarter of a century has passed since then, and it is quite remarkable that somehow the historical developments have come full circle. Multiculturalism is the order of the day in Holland and most other countries in the world. Moreover historicism has borne its fruits of extreme relativism and pluralism and in Reformational philosophy it is being critically argued that Dooyeweerd's view of the historical process of differentiation was perhaps even Eurocentric (McIntire 1985; Griffioen 1994b) and based on a view that the state of differentiation attained through modernization was normative2. South Africa has moved from a policy of apartheid to a new multicultural democratic society with the ideal of the development of a unified nation

made up of the "rainbow people of South Africa", an expression so aptly introduced by president Mandela (following Archbishop Desmond Tutu). The image chosen to depict the unity and diversity even reminds of the image utilized by Dooyeweerd et al to emphasize the unbroken white light broken up by time in the diversity of colours of the rainbow. Sophisticated and refined definitions and distinctions of structural and confessional pluralism have been developed (Mouw and Griffioen 1993; McCarthy, Oppewal, Peterson & Spykman 1981) and in the public square we have been confronted squarely with the problems of multiculturalism, cultural relativism, universalism and particularism. How grateful one might be for the significant developments towards a democratic and more integrated political system, the nagging problem of multiculturalism based on traditional, tribal and more differentiated forms of culture are ever present, not only in Africa but also in Europe and North America. The question legitimately surfaces whether the imperative political integration into a nation-state that Dooyeweerd advocated, is an attainable ideal in the presence of so much diversity.

Is there any moral to the story? Perhaps one of the most salient features of this development is the recognition that our interpretation and understanding of the societal structures present within a specific historical and cultural setting are also very strongly coloured by contextual and historical factors and that it would do well to heed the warning that the identification of societal structures needs to acknowledge the social and cultural conditioning in which the structures are positivized. Please note, I do not say that historical processes have made the recognition of a structural

order for society redundant and I am distinctly uncomfortable with proposals which contrast the idea of a creation order to "an ethos of compassion". I can hardly imagine anything more compassionate than God's mercy-full covenantal law Word for His creation. It binds (Van Riessen 1970) integrates and restores. It has a very strong therapeutic and healing presence even in its constraining and restraining function in human life. Personally I have experienced the gift of cultural identity as one of these merci-full gifts in spite of the ideological distortions perpetrated in its name. What I am arguing, though, is that Christian scholars ought to widen their often predominantly ethnocentric or culturocentric frame of reference in order to accommodate God's revelation in other cultural contexts than their own. Perhaps this is one of the profitable things one could learn from post-modernism's emphasis on pluralism.

The more fundamental issue is the tension between universalism and relativism, which seems to be so characteristic of discussions dealing with pluralism and multiculturalism. And these problems, in turn, are very closely related to the perennial philosophical problem of the one and the many, unity and diversity in both Western and non-Western societies. I found it interesting that Griffioen (1994b) more or less accepts the basic model in which the notion of structural and confessional pluralism has taken shape, especially in Dutch culture, a tradition which has also been continued in other parts of the world and to some extent has become the model that has been emulated elsewhere by Reformationally minded communities. Although I am theoretically and philosophically convinced that this is the

best possible option for the structuring of a pluralistic society in the grip of "wild pluralism", the question arose whether such an option is strategically viable within the complex type of societies Christians find themselves in. Moreover do the demands of a common culture and solidarity not constrain exactly such an attempt at "separation" on the basis of "parties from principle" as Hume (Cf. Garver 1990, 389) formulated it at a much earlier stage and different context. And if I understand recent proposals for a "transformational philosophy" (Klapwijk 19xxx, xxx) correctly, the question arises whether there is not perhaps far more (gold) grounds for common(-al) and solid(arity) that have to be reappropriated than there might be for the proclamation of directional antithesis. These are obviously questions that need to be dealt with.

An important question in this respect is the locus of commonality and order on which communication between diverse groups is based and the role the "social construction of reality" plays in this process. Another question3 central to these developments, is whether it is possible to articulate a Reformational position which  does justice to the centrality of what is shared, held in common or what is universal and yet not do injustice to that which is authentically different and genuinely plural among individuals, whilst also holding on to the Reformational understanding of directional and confessional pluralism and the spiritual anthesis. I am aware of the fact that dealing with this problem also requires attention to the traditional problem of "common grace" and the recent proposals for a transformational philosophy – issues that I cannot address in the context of this response. It

seems as if Christians are caught in the dilemma of identifying with that which is common and universal and a antithetical position required by their confessional commitment. This dilemma surfaces very concretely in the issue of multiculturalism.  In this paper a central thread of Griffioen's 1994b paper, which perhaps needs further elaboration is picked up, viz the issue of pluralism in its many guises.

## 2. Pluralism the "meta-narrative" of post modernism

Trying to come to terms with the factual state of affairs of "varieties of pluralism" (Bernstein 1987) and the post modernist emphasis on pluralism, one is knee deep in a whole plethora of possible and impossible forms of pluralism dealt with in the literature. Apart from multiculturalism and cultural pluralism one finds metaphysical pluralism, ontological pluralism, methodological pluralism, epistemological pluralism, theoretical pluralism, metaphorical pluralism, systematic pluralism and a host of others sorts and types of pluralism. The question arises whether the distinction between structural and confessional pluralism found in Reformational philosophy is adequate and sufficient to deal with fundamental problems of unity and diversity, constancy and change and solidarity and the antithesis which lie at the root of most of these forms of pluralism. Dooyeweerd's philosophy, rooted in the "meta-narrative" of Christianity provides significant distinctions which make it possible to contextualize many of the issues, but the fundamental presupposition of his philosophy is a global view of reality and the recognition of a total view of society and a "total" theoretical view underlying the scientific investigation of society. And it is exactly this type of total view or global view that arouses the suspicion of post modernists (Bernstein 1987). Christian philosophers need not necessarily share this suspicion, but do need to give some account of the reasons why they do or do not feel comfortable with such a rejection of meta-narratives and global or universal views. Perhaps it is exactly the fact that post-modernism has developed its own meta-narrative: "There are no metanarratives...!" 4 which makes an uncritical acceptance of the post modern stance untenable. This has been very succinctly argued by W.J.T. Mitchell (1986, 497) who claims

that pluralists are "closet dogmatists" who, especially in
American intellectual life have regarded the repression of
dogmatism as a general acceptable strategy. Mitchell says:

> "Pluralism is a curious hybrid of dogmatic and
> ideological elements. In Pepper's version it is a
> dogmatic antidogmatism, a philosophy which pretends that
> it has no dogmas itself and which refuses to tolerate any
> other philosophy that admits to having a dogmatic basis,
> that is, a foundation in beliefs that exceed proper
> "cognitive grounds". Pluralism's first problem, then, is
> not that it has a dogmatic basis, but that it refuses to
> recognize that basis".

This Mitchell calls the ideological character of this
refusal. Once this dogmatic trait in pluralism's emphasis on
tolerance and relativism has been recognized, we need to have
a closer look at the type of relativism which seems inevitably
to accompany post modern versions of pluralism.

## 3. The potential anarchy of "wild pluralism" and extreme relativism5

The phenomenon of pluralism and historicism (in the guise
of relativism) is part and parcel of a broader trend which in
many ways is characteristic of our daily lives (Bernstein
1987, 511). The consciousness of historical change is not only
characteristic of contemporary culture but also of our
scientific and theoretical reflection about culture to such
and extent that Toulmin (1971) claims that the developments
within philosophy of science is a litmus test for the basic
changes taking place in wider culture. Bernstein (1987, 516,7)
speaks of the almost chaotic babble of competing voices so
characteristic of the range of cultural experience. At the
same time there seems to be a significant preoccupation with
community, solidarity and communication especially at a local
level. What makes these developments more acute is the fact
that the pluralities have "gone wild". Bernstein (1987, 522)
argues that it has infected almost every aspect of human
endeavour. He says:

> "This is a pluralism in which we are so enclosed in our

own frameworks and our own points of view that we seem to
be losing the civility, desire and even the ability to
communicate and share with others".

Bernstein (1987, 522) says we seem to be living through a time
when there is "...a wild fluctuation between anxiety and
celebration of radical differences".  What is distinctive
about the mood of our time, he (Bernstein 1987, 522) says,
"...is the odd and unstable mixture of a sense of
fragmentation and of an interlocking system that develops
according to its own logic and over which we do not seem to
have any control".  Central to these developments is the
decentering of the Cartesian conception of the subject. To
some extent Reformational philosophy has been as critical of
the fundamental notions of modernism as post modernism is
today. But its critique of wild pluralism will be based not
only on its modernist moorings, but more specifically on the
lack of recognition of God's stable and reliable order for His
creation.

This state of post modern culture confronts us with the
intriguing problem of cultural pluralism and the challenges it
poses to the Christian university. Griffioen (1994b)
formulates this challenge succinctly:

"The challenge a Christian university faces ... is
to serve as a public forum in a multicultural
society. Being at the crossroads of structural
pluralities (as university) and directional
diversity (as a Christian institution) it can be
expected to be sensitive to all the pluralities at
stake".

In the following section a couple of aspects of this challenge
will briefly be discussed.

## 4. The Christian university, multiculturalism and theoretical pluralism

One of the fundamental insights of the Reformational tradition has been the emphasis on the development of a Biblically based Christian world view and Christian philosophical framework which would provide the unifying perspective within which to situate theory diversity. There is no doubt about the necessity of such a project, but the academic climate of post modernism is most certainly not conducive to the imposition of such a total view within the setting of the modern academy. And this state of affairs is exacerbated when students are drawn from multicultural and multiconfessional backgrounds. The Christian university is the nodal point where these crucial issues meet. If one argues that an adequate understanding of structural pluralism is a prerequisite for the positioning of the Christian university in society then an adequate understanding of the implications of confessional pluralism and perspectivalism is a prerequisite for its internal academic calling to Christian scholarship. Both multiculturalism and theoretical pluralism raises questions concerning the "larger picture" or total view within which such a plurality can be situated and evaluated. This is an issue that requires closer attention. In both cases the relationship of the universal to the particular is at stake.

### 4.1 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism obviously is a multi-facetted phenomenon. In a far stronger sense than in most other societal phenomena one discerns the entanglement of elements of structural and confessional pluralism in this phenomenon.

There are strong elements of what has traditionally been called "ethnicity" or cultures in the social anthropological sense of the word (Young 1976, ch.2). Here one thinks of the ethnic areas and suburbs in many North American metropolitan areas. There are also strong elements related to lifestyle and morals, such as the Californian gay lifestyle. In post modernism the term is often used to designate the right of groups to their own understanding and interpretation of life and values and the equality and relativity of these lifestyles and values. When the phenomenon is dealt with in a political context it calls forth the issue of rights of groups coupled with the concomitant notion of universal human rights. I agree with Griffioen (1994b) and Chaplin that human rights ought to be seen primarily as a juridical or legal notion, especially when it crops up within the modern political system. There is another dimension which ought to be recognized in this respect. It is the kernel of truth at the core of both universalism and particularism. Let me try to illustrate it with the following anecdote:

Recently I had the privilege to attend a Graduation Ceremony of one of the HBU's (historically Black Universities) in a former homeland, Bophutatswana, a small country which experienced a revolution a couple of weeks before the South African democratic election on the 27th of April 1994. That same evening, 220 kilometres away, I attended a choir festival as part of the celebration of the 125th year of the existence of Potchefstroom University, which included choir works of Handel and various other European composers. The contrast was remarkable! The cultural styles of the two ceremonies were literally "worlds apart". One was overwhelmed by the

impression that a university is a very specific First world phenomenon, a Western phenomenon embedded in the history and values of the West, equipped with a very specific understanding of rationality and scientific standards and that the introduction of a university to Third World circumstances necessitates a radical rethinking of the notion of a what is universal and what is particular in a university. One could argue that such a ceremony is actually only a external and symbolic ritual which need not necessarily epitomize fundamental differences of views concerning the intrinsic nature of culture, rationality or education.  The introduction of the notion of a university into a less developed culture (I recognize the value laden nature of this statement) inevitably leads to a destruction of the indigenous culture and a replacement with typically Western standards and values. An opponent of such a position could argue from the perspective of multiculturalism that such an imposition is not morally justified. But the critical question African universities have to deal with is how to reconcile the diverse value systems within a multicultural setting with the traditional and age old universal values epitomized by the university. Perhaps the situation of a Christian university within a multicultural society in transition, as is the case in South Africa, could be the best possible case study in this respect. A university per definition embodies universal values and the search for some sort of "universal truth". But local, cultural, regional and national issues forces this universal ideal to come to terms with the local and the particular. Questions such as the following need to be dealt with:

    * How does one adapt the typical Western concept of the

university to the needs of developing countries and people?

* Is there a cultural form or guise in which the university can come closest to fulfilling its specific cultural and educational task?

* Is it possible to meet the needs of Third World peoples without inevitably denaturing the structure of the university?

These are all important issues and ones that require close attention of the international Christian scholarly community. Moreover they are issues with which South African Christians cannot deal alone. As relevant and crucial as the critical input was from Christian scholars during the apartheid era, as crucial and decisive will be the contribution of Christian scholars who help think through how the complex issues at stake here, can be redemptively resolved. Interestingly enough exactly the modernistic and universalistic notion of rationality which has always provided a steadfast anchor for discussions of this kind, has thoroughly been eroded and discredited. Moreover the experience of many South African universities has been that the type of academic knowledge provided within the setting of the university has proved to be far removed from the typically contextual needs and requirements of developing cultures. Multiculturalism raises the question whether there is some universal common denominator which transcends or unifies the plurality or diversity of cultures, present within a society. Dooyeweerd's Christian philosophy departed from this basic question concerning a common denominator and came to the conclusion that a Scripturally informed answer to the three

basic questions concerning the origin, unity, coherence and diversity of societal structures is a prerequisite for the development of a Christian view of society and a responsible theoretical account of the unity and coherence in diversity of societal structures. Fundamental to the so called sociological ground idea is Dooyeweerd's (1957, 169) view that all societal structures of individuality find their radical unity and totality of meaning "...beyond cosmic time in the central religious community of mankind". 6 I shall not deal with the discrepancies which are apparent when one formally compares the triad of transcendental ideas in Dooyeweerd's development of the modal and the sociological groundidea respectively, except to point to the fact that the central religious community of mankind functions both as a transcendental a priori for the existence of the diversity of structures and is also a condition for a correct theoretical understanding of societal sphere sovereignty. A crucial issue in this respect is the question whether recognition of and obedience to structural principles for societal structures can be accomplished without the fundamental religious commitment to Christ. The formulation of the principle of structural pluralism often creates the impression that it is possible to recognize such structural plurality as a neutral or common (?) state of affairs, without it being accompanied by a communal commitment to the basic tenets of the Christian faith which makes both the understanding of the relationships between structures possible and provides protection against the temptations of relativism and universalism. Given, Dooyweerd's formulation of the relationship between Jesus Christ's redemptive work in creation and recreation makes it possible

to argue that even those who are not "in Christ", but are obedient to the structural norms for a given situation, can share in the blessings of what was traditionally been called "common grace".  But I think those who argue that one cannot divorce the obedience to structures and societal norms from the fundamental ultimate commitment to the giver of these norms, the Sovereign God, have a very strong point. It is exactly at this point where the tension between a common denominator and the directional antithesis surfaces. A tension that cannot be easily resolved.

There is another facet of pluralism, which is intriguing, when dealt with against the valuable  distinction between structure and direction so basic to Reformational philosophy. It pertains to the intricate blend of structural and confessional pluralism present in the issue of the plurality of theories with which most scientific disciplines deal with in the post modern university. Even though a university may find it's niche within society with the maintenance of all the norms pertaining to structural pluralism and even if it's confessional status is recognized and acknowledged by all and sundry and formulated in a mission statement, vision statement and academic creed, the Achilles heel of the Christian university is its attitude towards and critical accommodation of theoretical pluralism in its teaching and research.

### 4.2 Theoretical pluralism

Theory pluralism with its view that there are universally valid, but culturally local sciences, raises the question whether it is possible to identify some common denominator in terms of which issues like incommensurability, relativism, complementarity and contradiction of theories could be judged

and evaluated. In post modernism scepticism has replaced the search for the elusive universal common denominator, a search which has been given up in both instances, because essentialism and foundationalism has been found wanting and unable to provide the required universal support for modernity's notion of truth. Basic to this state of affairs is post modernism's privileging of the shattering of the subject with its concomitant inevitable splintering of identity; a process to which Feminism and Post-Colonialism also contributed a thorough scepticism about a "self" that is personal and homogenous. In this regard John Forrester[7] says that to think one can recover the holistic understanding of self is an anachronism. And yet, if I recall correctly, it is exactly such a plurality transcending self which is at the "heart" and the core of Dooyeweerd's Reformational philosophy both in its transcendental critique of theoretical thought and its discussion of foundational issues in his theory of societal institutions.

Theoretical pluralism can be understood in various senses: It can be understood as complementarity of theories as for example in Bohr's view of the complementarity of wave and particle theories of light. On the other hand a plurality of theories can also be mutually exclusive or even contradictory. In both cases a more encompassing picture with an implicit understanding (acceptance or rejection) of order is presupposed which provides the basic contours that function as criteria for determining complementarity or contradiction. In the Reformational tradition the notion of the creational order has been a central point of departure both for the understanding of the diversity of societal structures and

their interrelationships and also for the understanding of the process of theoretical concept formation present within the diversity of scientific disciplines. It is exactly such a notion of universality and stable order that is being contested by recent developments in philosophy of science.

## 5. Changing order8  or changing concepts and stable order9 ?

Recent developments in philosophy of science have put a strong emphasis on the social or conventional construction of reality as common denominator between theories and positions. Such a pluralism of worlds is seen as a socially constructed phenomenon and the diversity of perspectives or world views which it represents are seen to be reconciled or transcended through social processes such as the conversation of mankind, solidarity and communication. This theme cannot  be developed here extensively. What is of interest here is the central role of the social construction of reality as it manifests itself in the construction of scientific concepts.

In scientific theorizing it is the preoccupation with scientific change and the obvious instability of scientific concepts that has brought about renewed interest in the relationship of stability and order on the one hand and changing perceptions and concepts on the other (Cf. Collins 1985; Nersessian 1984; Nersessian 1989). Central to this relationship is the solution of the problem of induction and the understanding of **order** defended by a school or tradition. In each one of the recent "turns"10 in philosophy of science, the quest for order and the perennial search for the elusive "universal" takes on a different shape, yet in all cases this quest is superimposed on the subject–object divide of the Cartesian legacy (Bernstein 1983, 115).

Reflection on the role of language and language formation in science crops up in most philosophical schools of thought that are involved in giving an account of the nature and structure of science. This has been the case in the central role of formalized and axiomatized language in logical positivism, but also in most philosophical trends that have followed Wittgenstein in some or other way. Central to most of these projects is the concern for a satisfactory account of how changing languages and displaced concepts can give account of the order perceived in and experienced by all in the same common reality. It is the phenomenon of scientific change amidst the uniformities so characteristic of the world, which continue to intrigue philosophers, philosophers of science and of language. During the course of the sixties the preoccupation with language so characteristic of **The Linguistic Turn11** has a concomitant "turn" to the history of consecutive language games, forms of life and/or scientific paradigms, the so called **Historicistic turn** (cf. Kisiel 1974; Shapere 1966) represented by Hanson, Toulmin, Polanyi, Kuhn, Feyerabend et al. The well known discussion between Kuhn and Boyd (1980) about the "joints of nature" exemplifies the way in which especially Kuhn resolved the basic problem concerning the underlying stability and order which makes science possible. Kuhn is not willing to concede the ontological claim entailed by Boyd's position that scientific theories approximate one real world by the accommodation of language to the existing natural kinds in the world (Boyd, 1980, 407). On the contrary. Kuhn (1980, 418,9) says:

> "The view towards which I grope would also be Kantian but without "things in themselves" and with categories of the mind which could change with time as the accommodation of language and experience proceeded. A view of that sort need not,... make the world less real".

The historicist emphasis leads to a recognition of and sociological emphasis on the role of the scientific community as initiator and sanctor of the legitimacy of scientific knowledge and language – **The Sociological turn 12** (Brown 1984, 3-40) with its variations of inter alia conventionalism and constructivism. The Historical and Sociological "turns"

could be subsumed under the well known typology of Suppes (1974, 125-27) "Weltanschauungsanalyses".

**The Strong Programme of Sociology of Knowledge of the Edinburgh School,** on the other hand argues that sociology does not only always step in when there is a deviance from the norm of rationality, but that social causes are always present and are determining factors in the production of knowledge. The sociologists refuse to presuppose that scientific beliefs, if compared to beliefs within other human communities or 'tribes', have any special relation to reason, truth or reality. This position which argues that 'epistemic factors are actually social factors', exemplified by Bloor, is qualified as "extreme externalism" by Niiniluoto (1991, 139). Harry Collins (1985) constructivism or so called **Empirical Programme of Relativism** could be regarded as an extreme example of this position. Collins  claims:

> "It is not the regularity of the world that imposes itself on our senses but the regularity of our institutionalized beliefs that imposes itself on the world "
> "The locus of order is society".

(Collins 1985, 148).

He argues the natural world has small or nonexistent role in the construction of scientific knowledge, but concludes that because of the fact that there are groups, societies and cultures, therefore there must be large scale uniformities of perception and meaning (1985, 5). He wants to develop his EPR as a sociological solution to the problem of induction (1985, 6).

Collins' position is a Wittgensteinian one in which he anchors rules in language games and language games in social forms of life and ultimately concludes that habitual

perceptions are wholly a matter of convention.  Collins'
thesis is that scientific consensus is in principle
indistinguishable from any other sort of persuasion of people
to believe in a  political, ideological or religious system,
or even to believe for purposes of their own class or personal
or professional advancement. Now it is interesting that Mary
Hesse (1986a; 1986b) who certainly does not have too much
sympathy with the realist position (she often calls herself a
'moderate realist', when accused of being 'anti-realist'),
counteracts this position of Collins with an appeal to the
regularities of the psycho-social natural world. She says:

> "There is a perfectly good explanation of why science
> exhibits order, namely that it reflects something of the
> order of the natural world".

(Hesse, 1986b).

In her exposition of the family resemblances and the way in
which the recognition and learning of these resemblances takes
place she appeals to notions such as "the same experience...",
"shared assumptions", "the same physiology",  "the same
cultural expectations", "irreducible perceptions" that are a
function of "our physiology and its commerce with the world".
Elsewhere (1988:113) she talks about the "...objective order
in the psycho-social-natural world in which we all live
(which) is more various and multifaceted than our culture
recognizes –*more* various, but not *infinitely* various so that
any old classification will do for any given social purposes".
In spite of her recognition of these "objective realities" to
which language is related she opts for a "moderate" realist
position. Her motivation is clearly the fact that our
knowledge of these objective realities is limited, seldom
definitive and always open to correction. By and large this is
an assumption usually shared by anti-realist thinkers, yet it
would be possible to subscribe to this same fact and still be

sympathetic to a realist position.  McMullin (1984, 35) e.g., maintains such a position. She settles for a weaker form of realism (some would argue, for **anti-realism**) when she says that meanings of predicates in scientific language grow in dynamic interaction with culture and experience; terms do not correspond to universals, Hesse claims.  She contends that the threat posed by various forms of relativism following the work of Kuhn and Feyerabend,  has led to the undermining of the belief in the reality of laws of nature and their corresponding universals.  She says:

> "Radical revolutions of theoretical language call into question the possibility of reaching or even converging upon the ideal theory-language with its "correct" classification of universals and hence laws,  and if there is no convergence,  may this not be because there are no ideal natural types?" (1984b: 6).

Elsewhere she does acknowledge the fact that the social habits acquired by scientists do reflect the order in the world. She (1988) argues for a socialized epistemology with a reconciliation of various philosophical positions, but is not willing to agree with Collins that all inductive regularities are purely conventional.

Dooyeweerd's emphasis on the idea of law order fundamental to both ontological and theoretical diversity, provides a significant avenue to solve the problems posed by the "turns" in the philosophy of science, with their relativistic consequences referred to above. His recognition of the conditioning and structuring character of God's law for creation and the modal diversity of reality provides fertile avenues of access to understand why the consecutive discovery

of new factors operative in theorizing is possible and tempts schools of thought to localize the law or order in some aspect of reality itself albeit the logical, the historical or the social. Succumbing to this temptation inevitably leads to misguided and distorted views of plurality because it confuses perspectives with reified notions of plurality and negates the Reformational philosophical notion of the fullness of meaning and the coherence of diversity which relativizes any hypostasized notion of plurality. It is exactly this process of hypostatisation, which is the result of wild pluralism, that can be counteracted through the recognition of the relationship of all forms of diversity to a plurality transcending point of reference.

## 6. At the turn of the century: Can we do without total views?

One of the remarkable traits of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique has been the practically all encompassing scope of his philosophy. Departing from an epistemological problem he developed the contours of an extensive anthropology, philosophy of society, ecclesiology and ontology.... a philosophical "grand narrative" based on the pretence that in its attempt to identify the ontic structures conditioning our knowledge of reality, it would inter alia provide the basis for communication between competing philosophical schools. 13 From his point of view

both the transformation of society and the inner reformation of the sciences require and are dependent upon global views of reality, society, man and nature and truth. Moreover Reformational philosophy as transcendentalist project, argues that all theoretical positions implicitly or explicitly harbour such global views.14  Yet, Dooyeweerd's

transcendental critique of society and theories of society are not unproblematic.

In Dooyeweerd's (1957, 424,5) philosophy at least four possible notions of totality are found of which the transcendental Idea of the meaning totality provides a diversity transcending point of reference. Yet, this notion harbours a certain ambiguity. The idea of the fullness of meaning, often translated as the totality of meaning, ought most probably to have been translated as the fullness, unity or the concentration of meaning. "Totality" in the fourth sense of the term, appears open to at least the following renderings when read in conjunction with the definition of the task of philosophical sociology:

* Philosophical sociology provides a view of totality, i.e. a perspective on the whole of all societal relationships (in this sense there would be an indication that Dooyeweerd seems to work with a notion of society as a temporal whole) (Cf. Botha 1971); or

* Philosophical sociology requires an Archimedean point which transcends the diversity of societal structures and in this sense the philosopher needs to find a standpoint within the totality of meaning in order to facilitate a "correct" view of all societal institutions and their relationships. Such a position would prevent any form of totalitarianism or reductionism Dooyeweerd's philosophy argues, but of course constitutes some form of preconditionalism (Wolterstorff 1984).

The ambiguity of Dooyeweerd's conception of the "social" and the various possible interpretations of his formulation of the field of study of Sociology as a discipline ought also to be taken into account here.

Griffioen (1994b) claims that the Christian narrative of mediation and reconciliation is an adequate antidote to the emphases of post modernism. It is not clear whether he regards

the theoretical philosophical account of this Christian metanarrative by Dooyeweerd adequate to deal with the challenges posed by post modernism. In order to answer this question one would have to return to the transcendental critique as it was initially formulated by Dooyeweerd and applied to the foundational issues pertaining to societal relationships. In conclusion I would like to argue that two central notions of Dooyeweerd's social philosophy provide significant points of departure to counteract the relativism and fragmentation so characteristic of post modernism with its emphasis on pluralism, viz the creational law order which conditions the world we live in and the diversity transcending notion of the fullness of meaning. The transcendental critique provides us with a crucial Biblically conditioned insight that all possible diversity, albeit of reality, culture or scientific theories, are relativized by their relationship to the central point of reference of all of reality, human existence, human society and human knowledge ... the fullness of meaning, Jesus Christ who has reconciled all things to God.

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**ENDNOTES**

[1]. Griffioen, S. 1994. The relevance of Dooyeweerd's Theory of Social Institutions. Paper read at Fifth International Symposium of the Association for Calvinist Philosophy, August 22 - 26, 1994, Hoeven, The Netherlands.

[2].This was a point already made by J.D. Dengerink much earlier when he asked how it was possible that the principle of sphere sovereignty which Dooyeweerd regarded as a creational given, could develop historically in the process of historical differentiation. Cf. Dengerink 1948.

[3]. Reformulating Bernstein's (1987, 520) formulation.

[4]. I am indebted to Craig Bartholomew for this idea.

[5].Bernstein 1987, 522 introduces this term and points to the fact that Kuhn, Wittgenstein and Derrida are often cited as being in support of some wild pluralism. He disagrees with such a statement and argues that what emerges from Kuhn's, Wittgenstein's and Derrida's reflections on paradigms, language and translation is much closer to what he has characterized as being quintessential to the pragmatic understanding of pluralism.

[6].The ambivalent ways in which Dooyeweerd formulates the relationship between the heart and central religious community of mankind has been dealt with extensively by Botha 1971 and Strauss 1972.

[7]. In a paper read at the Conference on "Knowledge, Power and the Public Good" organized by the Centre for Scientific Development of the South African Human Sciences Research Council, July 1994, Pretoria.

[8]. **From the title of H.M. Collin's book 1985.**

[9]. **From the title of Hesse's review of Collin's book 1985.**

[10]. Cf. Botha, M.E. (1994) Understanding our Age. Philosophy at the turning point of the turns. The endless search for the elusive universal.

[11]. **Cf. the title of Rorty's book.**

[12]. Cf. Brown, J.R. (ed) Scientific rationality: The Sociological Turn. Dordrect: Reidel.

[13]. The problems related to the so called "pretence" of the transcendental critique is not argued here. Suffice it, at this stage, to refer only to the well known discussion in Reformational circles pertaining to the problems raised by the so called "pretence" of the transcendental criticism proposed by Dooyeweerd (Van Riessen 1970; Dooyeweerd 1941).

[14]. Theodore Plantinga has strong reservations concerning the applicability of terms such as "view" and/or "perspective" to the Christian approach. Cf. Plantinga, T. 1991.